

April, 1952

Volume 31

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# ***LABOUR ORGANISER***

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**PRICE FIVEPENCE**

## Situations Vacant

**BARKSTON ASH C.L.P.** invites applications for the post of Secretary/Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with National Agreement. Application forms obtainable from Mrs. E. Roberts, 3 Marshall Row, Garforth, near Leeds, Yorks., to whom they must be returned not later than 24th April, 1952.

**BARRY C.L.P.** Applications are invited for the post of full-time Secretary/Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms are obtainable from the Secretary, 109 High Street, Barry, Glamorgan, to whom they should be returned not later than 28th April, 1952.

**BRADFORD SOUTH C.L.P.**—Applications are invited for the post of Secretary/Agent. Salary and conditions in accordance with the National Agreement. Application forms are obtainable from Mrs. Chatterton, J.P., 3 Throxenby Way, Clayton, Bradford, Yorkshire, to whom they should be returned not later than 17th April, 1952.

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for the LONDON REGION

Forms of application and particulars can be obtained from the National Agent, The Labour Party, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W.1. Applications must be returned not later than 25th APRIL, 1952.



# THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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APRIL, 1952

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## ORGANISATION FOR POLLING DAY—2

### The Five-Card Game

by R. W. G. MACKAY

THIS SECOND ARTICLE proceeds on the assumption that a Constituency adopts the card system for its canvass: that is to say it records its canvass on cards and builds up a complete card index, putting the cards for each street into a separate folder, and then putting all the folders for each Area into a separate box. On the basis of a Division of 40,000 electors one would presuppose 35 Areas and Area Managers, so that in all there will be 35 boxes containing the cards and folders.

The task is to break down the Register so that we know exactly which electors we have to bother with, and what we have to do with them. If there are 17,000 Conservatives we want to have them put on to blue cards so that we need not bother with them further. If there are a similar number of Labour supporters we want to know all about them so that they can be properly dealt with on Polling Day.

Each box will contain one or more folders for each street, but in addition it will contain six other folders containing cards which are duplicates of those in the ordinary street folders, for Labour supporters who:

- (a) Need a postal vote.
- (b) Have moved from one street in the Polling District to another street in the same Polling District.
- (c) Have moved out of the Polling District into another Polling District.
- (d) Have moved into a Polling District from another Polling District, or from another Division.

#### The Cards

The basis of the work is the card index system. The cards are divided into different colours as follows:

Blue Cards—Conservative.

White Cards—Labour.

Pink Cards—Liberal.

Buff Cards—Doubtful 'A' and Doubtful 'B'.

The blue cards we really need not worry about further, except that naturally as canvassing progresses, they will be added to from the people at present on doubtful cards.

The pink cards (Liberals) should, however, be kept separate, because they need different treatment. In a way they should be treated as genuine doubtfuls. They should be canvassed with a view to discovering whether they are going to vote Labour or not. It is most important that Labour literature should be delivered to them. Every effort should be made to bring them in as Labour voters, and if necessary the Candidate should call on them himself. However, if it is obvious that they will not vote Labour, treat them as Conservatives.

Let us now look at the 'doubtfuls'. Here there are two main divisions, doubtful 'A' and doubtful 'B'. The doubtful 'A's' are of three categories:

1. Those people who have not been canvassed because they were out when the canvasser called. This is really a selective problem in the sense that

(Please turn to page 75)

**W**HO would be an Editor; who would serve on the Editorial Board of *Labour Organiser*? Recently we have been criticised for publishing nothing but stodgy 'Head Office stuff'. We were told: 'More controversy, let the readers have a go.' Voices assailed us demanding material of a wider scope than the purely organisational. We were told that people 'wanted opinions', not just factual articles. Bowing to the requests we published such an article last month, 'How Does an Agent Spend His Time?' written by an anonymous contributor — not as many readers appear to think, by someone at Head Office. And the result, a hornet's nest has been kicked over. Despite the outcry which this article has aroused we feel the response to have justified its appearance. Agents have been quick to the defence of their profession. In the readers' replies which we print here we are sure that many misunderstandings will be cleared up and the Agent's job be seen and realised, by those who may have thought otherwise, in a truer perspective.

## **Straight Talking**

by

**Jim McGrandle**

Assistant Scottish Organiser

**I** HAVE READ WITH INTEREST and not without amusement, the article submitted by a reader on the above subject. I would like to ask if he is really serious when he bases his arguments on the assumption that every Agent has a typist and believes that between them they could dispose of all the work in connection with raising Party finance in two days per week out of 5½ and a further half day per week to attend to correspondence from Local Labour Parties and Headquarters.

I, at any rate, want to bring your correspondent back to earth. The Agent by and large is his or her own typist. The luxury of a typist is the exception and not the rule, and in his highly competent two-fingered fashion (very often with obsolete machinery) he takes a darned sight more than half a day per week to answer correspondence—plus, of course, other incidentals like duplicating circulars, addressing envelopes for meetings, and it has been known for Agents to have had correspondence with other organisations apart from Local Labour Parties.

Your correspondent does not seem to realise that the Agent is on service 7 days per week and very often every night too; the 5½-day week is not for him. The tragedy of the matter is that the average Agent's time is largely devoted to the practical task of raising £s.d., and as a by-product of this effort his salary is sometimes met. Selfish perhaps, but

rather necessary, or so the Agent's family think.

Far too many Constituency Parties are all too willing to appoint an Agent and then disregard their responsibilities as employers. This is just another job for the Agent to worry about in order that members of the C.L.P. can have more time to argue Party Policy with particular emphasis on Foreign Affairs. The unromantic business of Party Organisation is too often left at the end of the queue.

I couldn't agree more that there is an overwhelming case for increasing subscription rates, especially from Trade Union and Co-operative sources; however, a good case does not raise money. This requires a more practical approach. If each member of a Constituency Party would sacrifice at the most four hours per month to the collection of membership subscriptions we would be well on our way to financial stability and working toward a solution to conserve membership. The only real solution, and your reader has moved a little way along the path, is the establishment of a Central Agency Service under the control and responsibility of Headquarters. Constituency Parties together with other affiliated organisations would require to contribute to a central pool for the maintenance of such a service. Your reader must be commended for his article if for no other reason than that it allows some straight talking about the Agency service.



# He'd Come a Cropper

says

B. J. G. BROWNING, J.P.

Agent, West Walthamstow

THE INTERESTING ARTICLE 'How Does an Agent Spend His time?' which appeared in the last issue of *Labour Organiser*, offered several suggestions for consideration, but had little to do with the subject heading on the time and duties performed by a Labour Party Agent. It also showed a complete lack of knowledge on the writer's part, of the day-to-day work of a Party Agent.

I agree that it is necessary for all Constituency Parties to have the services of a full-time Agent. It is also essential that those members of the Party who in many cases struggle to help find his salary, are entitled to the full use of his services, and at least once a quarter to a report on the progress or otherwise of the Party made to the Executive Committee.

I have always taken the view that it is wrong for the Agent to spend the major part of his time on schemes for the purpose of raising his own salary, or that parties whose income is limited to less than £650 a year, should be paying about £550 yearly in salary and extras, to administer, what in many cases amounts to propaganda to the value of less than £30 a year.

I think he should also be free, if possible, from normal secretarial duties, and barred from acting as secretary to Social, and Bazaar Committees, etc. His time should be better employed.

Experience has shown me that some constituency parties have obtained greater service from a voluntary or part-time Agent, than others from full-time Agents. I am not suggesting that a part-timer can give the equivalent number of hours, but rather suggesting that a good voluntary Agent is better than a poor full-time Agent. A good Agent is worth much more salary than he usually receives, and is sometimes in the position of being the only employee with many employers, every member of the Executive considering it his privilege to give orders to the Agent.

The amount of work an efficient Agent will personally have to do varies, dependent upon the type of constituency, size of membership, tradition, availability of cash, etc., but in the main is determined by the number of key-workers he builds around him, coupled with their ability

and zeal to do a real job of work, under the Agent's direction.

There are qualities needed in an Agent that no examinations, or study courses will show—ability to organise, quality of leadership, an even temper, zeal and purpose, to know how to smile and give a cheerful word when things go wrong or, when the occasion demands, look black, to know when to relax, or be firm, how to be tactful in approach to awkward members (and we have them), how to knit conflicting personalities to a common purpose, and how to give each member a job according to his ability.

I suggest that our friend writing from his own experience as an employer, being in a position to direct his employees to do a job, seeing that it was done, and knowing the remedy if it was not performed, would come a cropper if he were an Agent and proceeded to handle voluntary workers in the same manner.

The Agent knows that he asks a favour of all workers when he requires a job to be done. He also knows that the standard reached may not always come up to his expectations, being dependent on the quality of the workers at his disposal.

A good Agent can always find work to improve the efficiency and welfare of his Party, if he has the inclination and will to do it.

I should also like to point out that throughout the country there are few Agents who have clerical assistance in the way of typists, etc., and even from the point of view of secretarial work, our friend's assumption that the brunt of this is borne by the Agent's typist has no foundation. In the majority of cases any secretarial work has to be done by the Agent himself. It fact it would be true to say that the Agent must be a 'Jack-of-all-Trades' handling everything from correcting printers' proofs, repairing and using typewriters and duplicators, etc., quite apart from being the master of such specialised subjects as Electoral Law, Party Constitution and Policy.

If last month's writer believes an Agent's job to consist only of writing minutes, addressing and replying to a few letters leaving three and a half days a week with little to do, then I, as a voluntary Agent with over 20 years' experience, have

(Continued overleaf)

yet to meet the Agent fortunate enough to have such time on his hands.

Let me enlighten your contributor on all the spare time which he considers an Agent to have. Much of an Agent's work must of necessity be done at night time. Let us say, for example, that it is a Constituency with three Wards, a League of Youth, and a Women's Section, and this is by no means the largest set-up. The Agent, to keep himself informed of opinion and action being taken by the Wards, League of Youth and Women's Section, must attend at least one individual Ward meeting each month. He will also be expected to keep a paternal eye on the League of Youth and to show an interest in the members. So too with the Women's Section. He will visit them at least once a month.

On top of this there are many other duties such as Speakers' Classes, etc., run within the Constituency. An Agent in an average month, apart from Executive Committee meetings and one or two sub-committees, is spending something like nine nights each month at such meetings as I list above.

If our friend was employing labour at night, he would either be paying them double-time, or giving time off in lieu. I do not consider it unreasonable that Agents, who get no double-time for these evenings, should have probably one afternoon off a week. I would say here, however, that most Agents do not do this.

Further, our friend seems to have overlooked entirely such minor details as County Council and Municipal Elections, quite apart from Parliamentary Elections. In this Constituency, Council Elections come every year, which means that for at least a month beforehand the Agent must spend many more than nine nights a

month meeting the various Ward Committees, Sub-Committees of the Constituency Party and generally pepping up the workers within the Party. This accounts for another month of the year when an Agent's life can hardly be called a bed of roses. Apart from this there are County Council Elections every three years and also General Elections shall we say on an average once in three years. During these periods, an Agent, if he is worth his salt, works far more than eight hours a day or 40 hours a week. In fact, in most Constituencies known to me personally, the Agent works nearer a 90-hour week than a 40-hour week during the periods of an election.

Another factor to be considered is that most other people have set hours. An Agent almost invariably is in the office by himself for the best part of the day and it becomes a matter of trust to a very large extent the hours he keeps and the amount of work he does. I think the average Party gains more by this system than it would if there were set hours for the Agent to work and he was made to present a daily report of work done.

My experience of Agents has been that they certainly go over a 40-hour week, and also do considerably more in their day's work than the average member of the Party who works for his living in an outside job.

I spend at least half my time as an Agent in a voluntary capacity, and as a result I do enjoy a certain freedom in being able to speak my mind to the members of the Executive Committee, a freedom that I might not fully enjoy if I were full-time on the Party's pay roll, but in spite of this I say without hesitation that every Party needs a full-time Agent, but make sure the choice is a wise one.

## Eighty Hours a Week!

from

**HELEN BASTABLE**

Hon. Secretary, BASINGSTOKE C.L.P.

IT WOULD PERHAPS have been better if the layman who asks in the March issue of *Labour Organiser*, 'How does an Agent spend his time?', had taken the trouble to find out what an Agent in a County Constituency does do before he wrote his article.

It is extremely difficult to work out a weekly average of work because in practice the Agent is faced with rush

periods and sometimes slacker periods (how precious these are, if he gets them, to clear up all the routine work).

As a voluntary Agent I cannot speak for others, but I give below a rough estimate of routine work. This takes no account of General Elections, Local Elections, By-Elections, or other emergencies in which an Agent becomes involved. Nor does it make allowance for the accidents which



happen, such as the failure of a type-writer or a duplicator, or, if one is lucky enough to have one, a breakdown of one's car.

Moreover, in a County Constituency there are probably always areas which are unorganised and Parties which want gingering up. If an Agent wants to work more than 80 hours per week, he would find no difficulty in doing so!

#### AVERAGE PER WEEK

Hours.

#### Correspondence:

(With local Parties, Party members, Candidate, Southern Region, Transport House, outside bodies, etc.)	12
Dickinson Football:	8
G.M.C., E.C. sub-committees:	
Preparing for agendas	1
Minutes	1/2
Duplicating agendas and reports and circulating to 150 affiliated organisations	1
Attending meetings with travelling time	2
Public & Local Party Meetings:	
Attending, with travelling	16

#### Visits to Contacts & Key Workers:

With travelling	4
Public Meetings:	
Organising of (speakers, halls, publicity, etc.)	2
Labour Advice Service:	
With travelling	3 1/2
Conferences:	
And miscellaneous interviews involving considerable travelling	4
Interviews in Office:	8
Telephone Conversations:	
With all and sundry	3
Circular Letters:	
To Local Parties and affiliated organisations	2
Filing:	2
Press Cuttings:	2
Indexing and Record Keeping:	2
Purchase of Stamps, Posting and other Items:	1
Duplicating Notices, etc., for Local Parties	2
Mass Canvassing:	
In rural areas during 6 summer months with travelling and organising—8 hours per outing	4

80

## KEEPING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

by

FRED PHILLIPS

AGENT, BRIDGWATER C.L.P.

IN THE MARCH ISSUE of the *Labour Organiser* a reader asked how an Agent spends his time. It seems obvious that the reader in question does not have the foggiest idea of an Agent's work or, on the other hand has a grudge against someone or some people.

I fully agree with this contributor on one point, namely that an Agent spends about two days a week in raising his own salary but I would draw his attention to the fact that there are still one or two Agents about without typists to assist them. All the same, with or without a typist let us allocate two days on raising of salary and half a day on answering correspondence.

That leaves the Agent three days every week to go to football and cricket matches, play golf, go to the pictures and in general have a jolly good time. I shall write to all my Local Parties telling them that in future they must write to me only once a week and if they write more often they must not expect an answer.

I shall have to take steps too to get down to a maximum of 12 Local Parties and tell these Parties that in future their troubles are their own. Should a Secretary resign, it is their job to find another. No help will be forthcoming from the Agent.

If they want a speaker, they can jolly well find one themselves, because it is much more important for the Agent to try and cut down his working hours. I have not quite decided yet which of the 23 Local Parties, 3 Leagues of Youth and Women's Sections I shall ask to close down. I have not decided yet either what letters to throw into the waste-paper basket, for I get at least 12 every day.

I must, with the best will in the world, become slack and go to the office at 10 a.m. instead of 8.30 a.m., take two hours for lunch instead of one and go home at 4 p.m. instead of 5.30 p.m. The telephone can ring its head off and callers coming

(Continued overleaf)

to my office can go and get their queries answered by someone else.

The duplicating of circulars and meeting notices (over 2,000 last year) should be done by people who understand it. After all the Party has plenty of money and can pay for it and registration of electors is not absolutely necessary.

As for the evenings, I could easily cut out all the Committee and Local Party meetings and must give up trying to establish new Parties. This, after all, would only add to my work.

Let's take last year for instance with regard to Saturday afternoons. I had a lovely time at all the football matches and cricket matches with the exception of 45 Saturday afternoons, when I had to attend Executive Committee and General Committee meetings, County Federation and Regional Council Conferences, or going out canvassing with an organised party. Just to keep the record straight, I had ten Sundays on which I did no Party work.

Fortunately too there were no elections in my Constituency last year—with the following exceptions:

Borough Council by-election in February.

Borough Council and U.D.C. elections in May.

Borough Council by-election in September.

General Election in October.

This year promises to be even less strenuous and so far only the following elections will definitely take place:

County Council elections in April.

Parish, R.D.C., U.D.C. and Borough Council elections in May.

Borough Council by-election in June or July (due to Aldermanic elections taking place in May).

But why worry about elections. After all one of my three Urban District Councils is only just over 40 miles from the other.

'Reader' goes on to say that there should be 'certificated Agents'. He obviously does not know that there are such Agents already and the only thing they do not have is that higher salary he talks about. And where will that higher salary come from? I know the 'certificated Agents' will have to find it by spending some more time raising salaries. And who is going to pay for the so-called inspectors. The Constituency Parties of course. Bang goes another half-day trying to raise more money.

## How Little They Know

by **RON BREWER**

Secretary/Agent

**HORNSEY LABOUR PARTY**

**M**OST AGENTS must share my indignation at the patronising attitude of the article, 'How does an Agent spend his Time?' The article, does, however, serve some use in illustrating how little the average member understands of the position, purpose and work of the Party Agent—even the 'efficiency experts'.

It is an obvious truth that there are limitations to the extent which business techniques can be applied to Labour Party work. One must remember the lack of money which would be needed for the improvement of the internal efficiency of the Party, and when it comes down to Local Party Officers and Ward Officers you are dealing not with employees, but with voluntary workers. Outside ordinary office efficiency and the keeping of records, etc., the possibility of imposing business techniques is remote.

In an attempt to define what the 'Agent'

is, someone once described him as the Managing Director of the Party. This is as close to a definition as one will ever get, but it is only a near truth. No Managing Director has to face each month a critical board of directors amounting to some seventy-odd persons! Yet this is in effect what the Agent has to do at his General Committee. The Agent lacks many of the advantages of a Managing Director—even the mythical Agent's typist mentioned in the article under discussion.

Unlike in business the Agent is unable to 'sack' his 'branch' managers if in his opinion they do not measure up to the job. In the Labour Party these branch managers are the Local or Ward Party Officials. They are elected by the organisation concerned and the Agent is powerless to remove them. If they so desire it they can effectively thwart all the Agent's plans to improve the organisation and



there is little that he can do about it in many cases. Certain pressure can be brought to bear upon them by the Executive and General Committees demanding regular reports of membership, activity, etc.

This, however, is limited and sometimes it takes a considerable time for such pressure to become effective. He would be a very brave Agent who would stand up in front of a Local Party or Ward and tell them that their officers are inefficient and though he might gain in the long run if he did so, the immediate result might be disastrous.

It was alleged in the article that so long as the Agent 'keeps in' with the majority of the Executive Committee then he is safe against criticism. This is a very great over-simplification of a very big problem. As part of his work, the Agent may often have to criticise slackness in Wards or other sections of Party organisation. In doing so he may unwittingly incur the active dislike of those who are unable to accept such criticism in the spirit in which it is made. This can lead sometimes to tit-for-tat measures being adopted by them and it is then that the support of the Executive Committee is a great aid to the Agent.

If an Agent is to succeed he must have the confidence of his Executive and by imputation their friendship. If he has not got it, then as far as that particular constituency is concerned he may as well pack up.

Who controls the Party—the Agent or the General Committee? Well in practice, both of necessity must. It is perhaps a fault of some Parties that what they want in their Agent is a "yes" man to act merely as an office boy carrying out the decisions of the General Committee, and I suppose it is a fault in some Agents that they want to boss the Party. Both must work together.

The Agent must be prepared to face the fact that his Party will not always accept his advice on Party or even his organisation methods. At the same time a Party must not seek to keep their Agent on a lead. They must allow his initiative and enterprise full play to be used to the Party's good and recognise that the Agent is the Party's principal officer with that status—not just the guy who types out the notices. Most Parties and Agents have resolved the difficulties that arise from this type of arrangement.

The article in the March issue might well create fresh difficulties.

One unsubstantiated generalisation is that Trade Union organisers are often surprised that more visible results are not forthcoming. With all due respect to those friends might I say that there is a world of difference between Labour Party organising and trade union organising. Nicholas in *The British General Election of 1950*, says of Labour organisers: 'It is not uncommon amongst full- or part-timers to meet with Union officials but despite the overlap of interest between unionism and Labour, there is enough difference in the kind of work involved to make . . . consecutive tenure of such post difficult'. That is the opinion of an impartial expert.

Your contributor does not help us by telling how he reached his conclusions, or on what facts they were based. One can only surmise that the remarks were made in a fairly general kind of way and were not meant to be taken seriously.

One curious purpose of the article seems to be to reduce the relationship between the Agent and the employing Party simply to that of employer and employee. If that is carried to a logical conclusion it will be the Parties that suffer, not the Agents. A diary for the inspection of the Executive and/or one of the Party Officers is suggested. This presumably is to enable the Party to keep the Agent's nose to the grindstone. Carry this suggestion to its obvious conclusion—rigid office hours, payment for overtime, etc.—who is going to gain? Perhaps your contributor is one of those members who expect the Agent to leave meetings at half-past ten at night and still turn up fresh at nine o'clock on the next morning.

He tells us that with the best will in the world an Agent is liable to get slack and to shorten his hours. In an average week I put in something between fifty and fifty-six hours per week. Sometimes I would gladly exchange this for the forty-hour week that most of my members work.

The suggestion that a Party officer should be responsible for the oversight of the Agent's work pre-supposes that the General Committee will elect as its Senior officers persons wise enough, or capable enough, to judge the Agent's work as recorded by him. Senior office in the Party is rarely awarded on a person's organising ability so it is somewhat difficult to see how this suggestion will assist.

And just for final satisfaction let me enumerate how one Agent spends some of

(Please turn to page 78)

# Contesting Parish Elections

by

LEN SIMS, NATIONAL AGENT'S DEPARTMENT

★  
WHILE THE MAIN PROVISIONS are the same as those for other local government elections, the variations are important, especially as the previous procedure was quite different.

## Date of the Parish Council Elections

The date is fixed by the County Council and should be announced by the end of February. If by any chance the County Council fail to fix the day of election, it will be held on Tuesday, 6th May. Enquiry should be made of the Clerk to the Rural District Council, who will be able to give the necessary information.

Provision is made that where the election of the rural district and parish councils take place on the same day and for the same area, the polls shall, so far as practicable, be taken together. Where the polls are taken together, one Ballot Box may, if the Returning Officer thinks fit, be used. If two are provided and by mischance the voting papers are placed in the wrong boxes, the votes will not be invalidated. The ballot papers shall be of a different colour to distinguish between them.

The two elections will, undoubtedly, be held together in many places in view of time as well as expense.

## Notice of Election

This notice must be published by the Returning Officer and exhibited in some conspicuous place on or near the principal door of each church or chapel in the electoral area and by placing it on other such places and any other such manner as the Returning Officer thinks desirable.

A recent Order, made on 22nd February, 1952, provides that any reference to the Clerk of the Authority for which the election is held, there shall be substituted a reference to the Clerk to the Rural District in which the parish is situated. This means the Clerk to the Rural District Council shall be the Returning Officer. The Clerk or Chairman of the Parish Council will not be required to do anything except as may be required by the Returning Officer.

## Nomination papers

The nomination papers, obtainable from the Returning Officer, by any elector for the electoral area, need to be subscribed by a proposer and seconder, together with their electoral numbers. No assentors are necessary.

The Notice of Election will give the period and place for the delivery of nomination papers. Make sure these papers are delivered at the place fixed by the Returning Officer. Should there be any doubt at the place appointed, notify the Returning Officer that the papers have been delivered there. It is wise to hand in more than one paper in case of mistakes. Make sure the entries are correct and both proposer and seconder should sign one of their christian names in full—John W. Smith. P 1234.

If any doubt arises over the candidate's name, consult the Returning Officer beforehand. For instance, Wray—John, commonly known as Pat, would be in order.

The Consent to Nomination must be given in writing on or before the latest time for the delivery of nomination papers and attested by one witness.

## No election agent is necessary

Election agents are not necessary in Parish Council elections and it is wise to ensure that no person or persons incurs expense on behalf of a candidate. Where, however, there is an agent for the candidate, he must, within 23 days after the declaration of the poll, make a true return to the *candidate*, in writing, of all election expenses incurred by the agent. Failure to do so could result in a fine not exceeding £50.

## Polling Hours

The hours of poll are fixed by the County Council. If no order has been made the hours shall be from noon until 8.0 p.m.

Enquiry should be made at the Rural Council office at the same time as finding the date of election, thus avoiding giving wrong information or making unnecessary arrangements on polling day.



*With the extension of our Party organisation throughout the countryside, more Parish Council contests will be taking place than ever before in our Party's history. It will therefore be necessary to give some attention to the procedure governing such elections.*

#### **Extension of Polling Hours**

An application for the extension of polling hours from 8.0 p.m. until 9.0 p.m. can now be made by all candidates. The number of applications for such extension must not be less than the number of vacancies to be filled, e.g. 10 vacancies, 10 applications.

#### **Appointment of Polling Agents**

There is a limit to the number of polling agents per polling station, viz., not more than three or, if the number of candidates exceeds 20, four polling agents.

If the polling agents appointed to attend exceeds the permitted number, only those agents, up to that number, whose appointments are signed on behalf of the greater number of candidates, or in the event of an equality in the number of signatures, only such of those agents as may be determined by the Returning Officer, shall be deemed to have been appointed. The Returning Officer usually notifies candidates as to the numbers and co-operation on this is best from all points of view—should it be felt such polling agents are necessary.

#### **Appointment of Counting Agents**

The Returning Officer will notify the candidates of the number allowed in addition to their wives or husbands.

Notification of the appointment of polling and counting agents must be given, in writing, to the Returning Officer not later than the third day before the poll. Full names and addresses are necessary.

After polling day we turn our attention to the provisions covering the completion of the Return of Election Expenses. Let us therefore see what is involved.

#### **Legal Maximum of Expenditure**

A candidate at a local government election is permitted to spend up to a maximum of £25 and, if the number of entries on the Register exceeds 500, an additional 2d. per elector for each entry above that number. When arriving at that total delete all those not entitled to vote at the election—'Y' voters, etc.

#### **Joint Candidates**

Where two or more candidates run together the legal maximum permitted shall, in the case of two be reduced by one-fourth and where three or more candidates run together the amount shall be reduced by one-third.

#### **Claims**

All claims in respect of expenses incurred in the election must be received by the candidate within 14 DAYS after the date on which the result of the election was declared.

#### **Payments**

All such payments must be made within 21 DAYS after the day on which the result was declared.

#### **Return of Election Expenses and Declaration**

These must be transmitted to the Returning Officer within 28 DAYS after the day on which the result was declared. A recent Order dispenses with the necessity for the Declaration to be made before a Justice of the Peace.

#### **Finally . . .**

When allocating expenses it may well happen that where Rural and Parish Council elections are being contested together, all candidates use the same Committee Rooms, materials, etc. In this case it will be necessary to divide the expenditure over the two election contests and then over the respective candidates.

Where receipts cover a number of candidates, each Return must be based on a division or allocation of costs. The Returns can be sent in together with the total bills and receipts attached. These can be cross-referenced with the items on the Lists.

Copies of *Reminders to Election Agents* which deals fully with these and other aspects of local government elections, can be obtained free on application to the National Agent's Department, The Labour Party, Transport House, Smith Square, London, S.W. 1.

# REMEMBER THESE LOCAL

## CANDIDATE'S CONSENT FORM

This is a more detailed document than the one for parliamentary elections. Take care to fill in more than one qualification if possible, especially the prior '12 months residence' entitlement, as this sustains a councillor for the full period of office, even though either or both other qualifications lapse. Do not overlook the signature of a witness.

## NOMINATION OF CANDIDATE

In borough and urban district council elections every candidate's nomination paper must be subscribed by two electors as proposer and seconder, together with eight others as assenters. All must be registered in the electoral area concerned. No elector must subscribe to more than one nomination paper in respect of the same candidate.

In rural and parish council elections the nomination paper is subscribed by two local electors as proposer and seconder. No assenters are necessary.

## FILLING IN NOMINATION PAPERS

The greatest possible care should be taken in completing the nomination paper. If any point arises over the candidate's name, consult the R.O. beforehand. For instance—Edward 'commonly known as Eric'—would be in order. Any fault can invalidate a paper. Proposers, seconders, and assenters should sign one of their christian names in full. It is held that one initial does not disclose identity. J. Smith may be (John), (James), (Joan), (Jane) Smith. The place of abode is the residence, not the business address, and the name of the town or village must be given. The description of the candidate is usually signified by his occupation.

The Election Agent would be advised to make a draft of his No. 1 paper to ensure no mistakes occur, and to ask those subscribing to sign as indicated on the draft. Young persons with names prefixed 'Y' on the register cannot subscribe a nomination paper at these spring elections. Their entitlement as electors does not become operative until 2nd October.

## DELIVERY OF NOMINATION PAPERS

If any difficulty or dubiety arises at the place appointed in a rural area, notify the R.O. that the papers have been delivered there. Deliver more than one nomination paper to the R.O. At previous elections, an only paper, on proving faulty, has caused our candidate to lose the election.

## VALIDITY OF NOMINATION PAPERS

These are examined by the R.O. after the expiration of the time for their delivery. Ordinarily the R.O. has no jurisdiction over the qualifications of the candidate. He decides on the validity of the nomination paper as a legal form. His decision that a paper is valid cannot be questioned, but if he decides a paper is invalid, the decision can be subject to review on an election petition. He notifies the candidate of his decision and publishes the notice of nomination on the following day, or in the case of rural elections, the third day.

## APPOINTMENT OF ELECTION AGENT

Notice of the appointment of the Election Agent and the address of his office must be made to the R.O. not later than the latest time for withdrawal of candidate; otherwise it will be deemed that the candidate is acting as his own election agent. It is advisable to notify R.O. before nomination.

Election Agents are not required in parish council elections.

## HOURS OF POLL

In municipal boroughs the hours of poll shall be from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m.

In urban district council elections the hour of commencement shall be fixed by the county council. If no order has been made the hours will be from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m.



# ELECTION POINTS

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In rural district and parish council elections the poll shall commence at the hour fixed by the county council. If no order is made the hours shall be from 12 noon until 8 p.m.

**Important.**—It would be wise to ascertain the hours decided upon by enquiry at the council offices. In many instances wrong information was given on poll cards and considerable inconvenience caused as a result.

## **EXTENSION OF POLLING HOURS**

An application for the extension of polling hours in the evening from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. can now be made by candidates in all elections. The number of applications for such extension must not be less than the number of vacancies to be filled, e.g. two vacancies—two applications.

Applications must be made to the R.O. and delivered not later than the latest time for withdrawal of candidature—12 noon on the twelfth day before election.

## **CANDIDATE'S RIGHT TO FREE USE OF SCHOOL ROOMS**

In effect, Section 83 of the R.P.A. 1949 gives candidates the same right to use a county or voluntary school as for parliamentary elections (but not Halls, Libraries, etc.). No payment can be claimed for the use of the rooms, but a charge can be made for incidental expenses such as lighting, heating, cleaning, etc.

## **WINDOW BILLS AND ELECTION POSTERS**

Window bills can be shewn without limitation during period of election. Election posters may be exhibited out of doors without the consent of the planning authority. Where bills are displayed on other than commercial sites they must not be posted until the election has commenced. All must be removed within 14 days.

## **POLL CARDS**

Candidates can issue their own poll cards to electors. The R.O. does not publish official poll cards as in the case of a parliamentary election. There is little need for candidates and agents to agitate themselves over poll cards of opponents. Poll cards are partisan bills, and only cases of fraudulent misleading of the electors on a matter of fact related to the election would be actionable. Such old-time objectionable wordings like 'Vote thus' have no intimidating character to-day. Poll cards are not liable to Purchase Tax.

## **IMPRINTS**

The provision covers not only bills, placards and posters but extends to any printed or duplicated documents distributed for procuring the election of a candidate. The actual distribution by post or otherwise is also illegal. Give a strict order at the beginning of the election to your printer on this matter of imprints.

## **MOTOR CARS**

The parliamentary provisions respecting the registration and limitation of the number of cars for conveyance of electors to and from the poll do not apply to local elections. The other provisions respecting no payments for such, and the prohibition of the use of vehicles usually or occasionally let out on hire, stands and must be observed by the candidate and agent. The simple legal fact is that neither the candidate, nor agent, nor anyone, is entitled to pay for the use of cars to fetch voters to the poll.

## **POSTAL VOTES**

The postal vote is allowed at county, municipal and urban district elections. It is not available for rural and parish elections. Applications on form R.P.F.7 can be made to the Registration Officer prior to the latest day of Notice of Election on account of the nature of occupation or employment, or because of blindness or physical incapacity, but not on account of removal, which applies only to parliamentary elections.

*(Please turn to page 78)*

# Organisation and Education

by

*George Wright*

**I**T is possible that there is some danger of the development of political and economic discussion within the Party being impeded by those who hold the view that education and organisation activities are competitors for members' interest. For this reason it should be stated that the object of political discussion is ultimately the same as that of organisation, that is, the return to power as quickly as possible of a Labour Government.

It is true, of course, that the method is different. In the process of developing discussion along these lines, it should be possible to increase fairly rapidly the number of people who can put the case for Labour in a much more effective and rational way. This being so, a considerable contribution will have been made to the number of people in the Party who are able to convert to the Labour viewpoint that number so essential to secure the return of another Labour Government.

If there are those who hold the view that educational activity is a competitor with organisation then it would be as well to look at the part which education has to play in Party development.

Turning for one moment to the magnificent organising achievement which pulled out nearly 14 million votes, the fact remains that these were not enough to keep a Labour Government in power. Whatever reasons may be advanced for not securing a majority at the last General Election, the simple fact is, that we have not, at this stage succeeded in converting sufficient numbers of the population of this country to the view that the Labour policy is the right one.

Neither should it be assumed that in the last election our opponents secured their maximum vote. It is not possible to be very definite about the extent to which the Conservative vote may be increased or decreased. The only thing of which we can be sure is that every effort must be made to increase the Labour vote.

## **Policy, Propaganda and Organisation**

The policy, propaganda and the organisation of the Party are the three streams which we must exploit to secure any increase in the Labour vote. Now, while there may be a great deal of argument as to which of these is the most effective method of increasing our vote, it is

doubtful whether any effective conclusions can be drawn from such discussions. It is reasonable to assume that any decline in the strength of organisation or in the effectiveness of our propaganda would lead to a fall in our voting strength. It is much more difficult to make any decisions as to the effectiveness of policy as a vote winner.

We can, of course, be reasonably sure that any policy which is out of sympathy with the wishes of the rank and file would weaken the Party, however effective the machine may be. It is unlikely that people could be persuaded to vote for a policy with which they had little or no sympathy. Given a policy which commands sympathy, our task then is to get that policy over and to get sufficient people to the polling stations to secure a majority.

## **Political Education**

Discussion on the economic, political and social aspects of policy must be regarded as one of the methods which give additional support to the three main streams outlined above. It should not, under any circumstances, be looked upon as something separate from normal Party activity or as a competitor to any existing Party activity.

We now have an opportunity to examine the policies which we think will lead to the building of the society in which we want to live. The framing of this policy should not be left entirely to the leadership, but constructed in consultation with all units of the Party. It is not possible to examine all aspects of policy at annual conference through the process of submitting resolutions. However desirable this may be there is not enough time to draw up a long term policy at annual conference. Therefore, if the job is to be done well, it must go on all the time and be included as a normal Party activity.



If, as is argued by some, the policy of nationalisation calls for some revision, then it should be the task of the Party to discuss why and in what practical ways the policy should be revised. It is not very helpful to pass critical resolutions about the policy of nationalisation unless they can be accompanied by some constructive proposals as to what policy should be. The formulation of constructive proposals involves some examination of the existing difficulties. Once these have been discovered, it is possible to go forward on a constructive basis. In short, finding out what is wrong to enable us to put it right.

Similarly, those who believe in a further re-distribution of the national income would be well advised to give some attention to the way in which the national income is at present shared. Having acquired some factual knowledge as to how the national income is at present

shared, they will then be in a position to make suggestions. They would also do well to examine the reasons why they think it should be shared differently from the way in which it is shared at present, and what the results of further redistribution are likely to be.

Policy is not made by passing resolutions calling on the Government for a more Socialist policy. It will be made by those who are prepared to examine the facts of any given situation in a rational way, not to start with the assumption that one has the absolute truth. Discussion of this kind calls for the types of mind that are prepared to accept the possibility that they may be wrong. Once having accepted this fact there is a possibility that they can soon get on the right track.

It is hoped that these few notes will do something to dispel any possibilities of conflict between the development of Party political discussion and organisation.

## THE FIVE-CARD GAME (continued from page 63)

- they can probably only be contacted at night or early in the morning.
2. Those people who have not been canvassed because they have moved. If this is so an attempt should be made to find out their addresses, and a letter should then be sent to them by the Sub-Agent or by the Candidate to try to find out their views. In the last election letter-cards were used in Reading North with great success. If any of these people turn out to be Labour supporters they should be put on to white cards and treated as Labour Removals, who will be dealt with in a subsequent article.
  3. Those people who still have not made up their minds as to what they are going to vote. Canvassers must make up their minds when interviewing electors as to whether they genuinely have not made up their minds, or whether they are just trying to avoid disclosing their views. For example in Reading North last October we were about 2,500 down on our Tory cards, so it would seem that half of our doubtfuls were really Tories—unless we had made a mistake in our Labour canvass.

Now let us turn to the doubtful 'B's'. These are important in so far as they save unnecessary work from being done, and give us a picture of the total Register. They comprise the following people:

1. Those marked 'L' on the Register.
2. Those who have died since the Register was compiled.
3. Those who, for conscientious or religious reasons are unwilling to vote, and those who have moved and are quite untraceable.

Now we come to the white cards, which to us are of supreme importance. These should contain as much information about each Labour voter as can be ascertained in order to ensure that they are dealt with quickly and efficiently on Polling Day. A note should be made on the card in the street folder if an elector (a Labour supporter) will require a postal vote, comes under the heading of 'removal', needs a car, would like to see the Candidate: then the next step is to make out for such a person a duplicate card which will be inserted in the appropriate additional folder at the back of the box. If this system is carefully followed there should be little difficulty in getting in the maximum number of Labour votes on Polling Day.

We regret to announce the death of Mr. W. H. Jacobs, formerly agent in East Ham. An appreciation by W. Stewart Rainbird, agent in East Ham (North) from 1921-50 will appear next month.

## Further To R. W. G. MACKAY

MAY I BE PERMITTED to reply to a few of the points raised by Mr. R. W. G. Mackay in the March issue of the *Labour Organiser*.

His first point is on the size of his poll. With nearly 87 per cent I do not think he has anything to grumble about. A poll of such size will represent very nearly 100 per cent of the live register. He must bear in mind, that the 'freezing date' for the register used in October, 1951, was 20th November, 1950, or nearly eleven months previous. Thus, it is safe to assume that a fairly large number of people will have died, others removed, as he says, which brings my point home, that a poll in the region of 90 per cent on a register nearly a year old, is virtually 100 per cent of the live register.

My second point is, that in my view he has nothing to grumble about the size of his poll. What he should consider is, the people are going to the poll, but are voting the wrong way. What is he going to do to see that a thousand or two of them change their point of view in time for the next election? In other words, education of a political nature is sadly lacking. This applies to a number of constituencies (including my own). It is very simple for Transport House to keep sending us leaflets at 25/- a 1,000 or newsheets at 50/- a 1,000. but the whole point is that those marginal constituencies to which Mr. Mackay refers, have not the money to purchase them. If we are serious in our desire to win over a number of the marginal seats, then money must be found to provide these areas with literature in order to educate the electorate.

Mr. Mackay goes on to refer to polling day machinery. He says a Committee Room cannot handle more than 300 or so Labour promises. What nonsense! A Committee Room can handle any number of promises always providing you have it staffed by persons who know their job, and also work a system that entails the least amount of work. In other words, simplicity with efficiency. Is it not true to say, that in scores of places we staff our Committee Rooms with elderly people, many of whom have not the slightest idea what they are doing or why it is being done?

Another serious point. Has Mr. Mackay considered the expense involved in running so many Committee Rooms? My own constituency is so placed that I have to run far more than I wish to, due to the scattered nature of the area. Committee Rooms, runners and other expenses, took about one quarter of my permitted maximum. If Mr. Mackay continues with his idea of a room for every 300 or so promises, he will be spending nearly one half or at least one third of his permitted maximum.

No sir, I have given instructions to curtail the use of Committee Rooms. Where two were formerly one must now suffice.

My last point is this. It is very easy to talk of decentralisation in a town the size of Reading. But come and have a go at such a task in a constituency which comprises four separate local authorities; four distinct communities; each one having nothing to do with the other (unless they are forced to). I like his idea of twelve Sub-Agents. Are they all full-time jobs for the period of the election? If so the wage bill for this item alone will be about £200. Come, Mr. Mackay, this will not do. Your staffing bill and polling day expenses, on an electorate of 40,000 as you mention, will be taking about 75 per cent of your expenses.

R. BELBEN,  
Rossendale, Lancs., Agent.

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## NEW APPOINTMENTS

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE have authorised the following new Agency appointments:

Mr. N. Howard, aged 23, to Poole C.L.P.

Mr. J. Campbell, aged 31, to Billericay C.L.P. He has been a full-time Agent since October, 1948, first at East Edinburgh and later at Edingburgh (Pentlands).

Mr. K. Solly, aged 30, to Ashford C.L.P. Since August, 1950, he has been temporary full-time Agent in Croydon West.

Mr. G. Lewis, aged 26, to Uxbridge C.L.P., and Mr. J. C. Reed to Hayes and Harlington C.L.P.



# YOUR HOLIDAY— PLUS

WHEN someone in Head Office picked up the telephone and asked our printers to run off another 50,000 Filey Rally brochures he was just putting into effect the great enthusiasm which has been aroused over the Rally.

Literally tens of thousands of inquiries have been made and already it seems that the success of our 1949 Filey Rally will be eclipsed. Up and down the country Parties are awarding scholarships to encourage their members to attend. Some trade unions are doing the same.

For many of the younger people attending, the highlight of the week June 14-21 will be the Annual Conference of the

League of Youth. Surrounded by such enthusiasm and interest this Conference should afford some memorable debate.

Just at the moment Transport House is dotting the 'i's' and crossing the 't's' of all the added attractions to be given, over and above the usual facilities afforded by the Butlin organisation.

Special demonstrations will be led by Party leaders, numerous educational programmes are being devised, there will be film and theatre shows.

Alive to rising costs the Party has cut the cost to the lowest possible figure.

The charge is £6 15s. for the week—an all-inclusive figure covering everything from accommodation in a delightful chalet, three excellent meals a day, dancing to Billy Ternant and his orchestra, etc., etc.

Definitely a holiday with a difference. Everyone present will be a friend in the truest sense of the word, including the many visitors from overseas whom we are expecting to come.

## THE PRESS AND 'INTERESTING' ELECTIONS

by PETER CAMERON, Secretary-Agent, Toxteth

FOR a long time the Press—both nationally and locally—has been at great pains to assure us that the general public are not interested in politics. At every election the old tale has gone out—'Quietest election ever. No interest at all. People couldn't care less'. Indeed, some papers have devoted more space to putting over this line than they have spent in reporting important speeches by Cabinet Ministers.

As my experience of elections is limited to those of the post-war period I have had to rely on secondhand reports in trying to discover just how accurate is the claim that elections are getting duller. Early this year the Southport by-election came along giving me a bird's eye view of just what makes elections 'interesting' for the press boys.

The election itself might be said to have started about twenty-one days before the day of the poll. In that time a number of remarkable things happened. Firstly the Tories selected a candidate, called a public adoption meeting (members only) and then had to sit back helplessly and watch the adoption meeting reject the candidate and select another (the other

being a local Councillor who five minutes previously had seconded the motion that the nominee of their General Purposes Committee be formally adopted).

The most amazing allegations were made. It was suggested that known Labour supporters and even a couple of Communists had been issued with tickets for the packed adoption meeting. The unfortunate Agent had to explain that any person who held membership of a Conservative club in the town was entitled to an admission ticket.

This was grand stuff for the local press—right up to polling day infuriated readers wrote giving their opinion of this miscarriage of justice. Even the national press found it useful for the scandal columns.

Ten days before polling day the Labour Party held a mass rally. The hall was crammed by 1,600 people and another 400 were turned away. A week later a second rally saw a similar number of people in the hall and several hundreds listening to the relay on the promenade. During the week the ordinary schoolroom meetings were well attended.

(Please turn to page 79)

## How Little They Know—

*Continued from page 69*

his time. Letters: Average postal bill for a compact Borough Constituency five to seven shillings per week. This would appear to be slightly higher than the average given of some twelve letters per week. Keeping in touch with the Press (including buying cups of tea for journalists at own expense) one afternoon per week. It might lead to a paragraph in news briefs or a front-page lead story. How would your efficiency expert measure the value of time thus spent? Social Service Work: Rent Acts, housing, dustbins, national assistance, Health Insurance—average two to three callers per week, more often than not voluble persons who present you with a garbled version of the facts and reams of grubby documents filed away in old envelopes all of which have to be sorted into chronological order before you start. Preparations for Committee: A good Agent gives at least half a day to preparation of the business papers and general arrangement for any meeting—Executive, General Committee, or Sub-Committee. The ordered progress of these doesn't just happen—it has to be planned for. Then there are Ward Secretaries and other Officers to see, Party officers to consult, very often a long session with the printer to plan out some

particular piece of work, consultations with the regional organiser, with the electoral registration officer and the not unimportant item of the postal vote which needs a little attention. After those few things all the Agent needs to find time for is to attend the monthly aggregate members' meeting, to attend Ward and Section meetings, the Council Group and the Council meeting, and to devote some time to planning ahead for elections, membership drives and other somewhat minor matters.

Further correspondence will appear next month, including comments by L. H. A. Hilliard, General Secretary, Agents' Union.

## WELL DONE HARKSTEAD

EASTERN REGIONAL ORGANISER W. T. Young, reports considerable, and commendable activity on the part of Harkstead and District Local Labour Party which covers five villages in remotest Suffolk.

There were 203 individual members last year from whom £66 was collected in subscriptions. This averages over 6s. per member and was due to highly effective work on the part of collectors.

They also raised over £148 with social functions during the year.

## REMEMBER THESE LOCAL ELECTION POINTS (continued from page 73)

### PROXY VOTES

There is entitlement to use these in all local elections, but only by those already having a proxy appointment for their parliamentary vote. No special application for a proxy vote can be made directly for a local election, because the parliamentary proxy vote carries with it the right to vote at a local election.

### ELECTION EXPENSES

An agent should use a duplicate order book and enter in it not only direct orders for material but 'per agent' everything he purchases directly however incidental day by day. This is a way of saving worry at the time of having to make up the return. An item forgotten cost over £100 to get relief from the Courts for nine candidates proportionately involved.

### OUTSIDE BODIES — Section 63

Election Agents should in the case of a trade union or local society desiring to circulate its members or publish anything relating to the elections avoid for them the necessity for their doing it under the complications of Section 63. The agent needs to place an official order (not the authorisation) in the first place for the bills or circulars. His payment can be direct and the body can give an equivalent donation, or per contra receipts can effect the same. He can then allow the distribution, and will show all costs, including postages, etc., in his return.



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### PARISH PUMP

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—where it still exists  
—has become a  
show-piece relic. But  
the Parish Meeting  
won lasting fame  
as the forerunner  
of our elected local  
government. Though  
in a later period local  
issues and opinions  
have been scoffed at  
as “parish pump  
politics,” they will  
play an important  
part in this year’s  
council elections. For  
surveys of election  
campaign activities  
read and  
recommend the

**DAILY  
HERALD**

*Labour's Own Daily Newspaper*

### The Press and ‘Interesting’ Elections —(continued from page 77)

The final days of the election campaign saw larger audiences attending meetings than at the General Election.

I think that these few examples serve to show that our by-election was at least interesting. It remains now for me to give a few figures which I collected regarding newspaper coverage. During the period of the election proper the three local newspapers and the two Liverpool evening papers sold in the town produced a total of thirty-six editions containing election news. In no less than twenty-one I saw mention of such facts as ‘One of the dulllest elections Southport has known’ — ‘Still little interest in this quiet election’.

One edition contained such comment while mentioning at the same time that the Labour Party had a few days previously held the largest-ever political meeting in the town.

Finally I cornered a particular reporter who I knew was responsible for some of these statements and asked him outright what was his idea of an interesting election. ‘One where something happens at the public meetings,’ he replied. In other words the public will never again be interested in politics until audiences begin scratching out each others eyes!



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